

Implementation of New Research and Evaluation Framework by School Readiness Programs

Questions and Answers

1. **Q: What if we are reapplying in 2007? Do we still need to transition to the new Research and Evaluation Framework by July 1, 2006?**
A: Yes.
2. **Q: What if we are reapplying in 2007 and expect to make some significant program changes in July 2007? How will we select the indicators to use starting July 1, 2006?**
A: Selection of indicators will be based on your current program then modified at the time of reapplication, if necessary.
3. **Q: We will start converting our data system in Spring 2006 to meet the July 1, 2006 deadline to begin reporting under the new Research and Evaluation Framework. That means our old system will not be available for reporting April to June, 2006. What is your expectation for that transition period?**
A: The current data requirements are in effect through June 30, 2006. The accountability data and outcomes and indicator data you will be collecting beginning July 1 may be a smaller subset of the current requirements and may need to be collected using an alternative method until your system can be modified.
4. **Q: Since results imply benchmarks and changes in a child's development or condition, what data are considered baseline?**
A: Fiscal Year 2006-07 will be considered baseline for each program. However, there will be existing data on some indicators from previous years that we will be able to track over a longer period of time.
5. **Q: What methodology will be used to implement the newly adopted Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework?**
A: The Framework uses multiple reporting and evaluation approaches in order to understand the services provided and the results achieved. The three components of the SR Initiative evaluation are:
 - (1) Accountability data that identifies what services are being funded, who/how many are receiving services, and who are providing these services.
 - (2) Results data on identified outcomes and indicators.
 - (3) State selected data collection on selected programs and strategies.

6. **Q: Will the State Commission design tools to be used to implement the newly adopted Statewide Evaluation Framework?**

A: Yes, to assure consistency in reporting. The Evaluation Workgroup, which includes a county representative from each region, is in the process of developing these tools.

7. **Q: Will evaluation standards (including long and short term performance measures and outcomes) be distinguishable from contract monitoring measures?**

A: Contract monitoring within the SR program is the responsibility of the County Commissions. However, County Commissions will need to ensure that SR programs are collecting appropriate data to allow the County Commissions to report evaluation data to First 5 California.

8. **Q: Will there be evaluation templates that all programs follow?**

A: The Evaluation Workgroup is currently developing sample forms.

9. **Q: Will evaluation coaches continue to be available?**

A: The evaluation coaches are a component of the current statewide evaluation contract. Technical assistance is a part of the new Framework, however, it is not anticipated that it will be in the form of individual county evaluation coaches.

10. **Q: If a county is included in the longitudinal study and required to collect core client data (child-level data), who is responsible for data collection and data entry costs?**

A: The new statewide research and evaluation contractor will work directly with the identified programs to collect from them their service and outcome data on a study child. Because the study will have a sampling approach, programs/sites included in the study will only provide this in-depth data on a small percentage of clients served. The longitudinal study design will identify research questions we want to look at within the SR Initiative. Please refer to the Research and Evaluation Framework for a description of the Center For Research and its role in such studies. Data collection will take many forms, such as ongoing parent and child interviews and surveys, school records, teacher interviews/surveys, and data from any SR First 5 programs providing services to that child/family at any point and time during the duration of the study. **The programs will only provide data on what they do—the services they provide to that child/family and data from the measurements they use to monitor the child/family progress.** This will not be standardized across programs (although we will eventually code it to create some standardized elements) as children/families will be receiving a unique combination of services within and across programs. This program information and data will be layered with the standardized information/data collected by the contractor

to create a complete picture of the child/family experiences and progress over time and the more in-depth analyses to address the studies' goals.

11. Q: How will counties provide input on indicators and county level data requirements prior to their finalization?

A: The State Commission adopted the Research and Evaluation Framework in October 2005. The Framework was developed by the Evaluation Workgroup with the majority of its members being County Commission representatives. In addition to the accountability data, each SR program will select (from a menu) and collect data on outcomes and indicators that are most relevant to its goals and program investments. The draft menu of outcomes and indicators will be reviewed and refined through January 2006.

12. Q: Can we comment on the School Readiness Menu of Indicators and Outcomes?

A: Yes. The draft menu of outcomes and indicators will continue to be reviewed and refined through January 2006. Please contact your regional representative on the Evaluation Workgroup if you have suggestions.

13. Q: Will the evaluation requirements and format be outlined in the School Readiness (Reapplication) Request for Funding?

A: Yes.

14. Q: Is funding based on results (e.g., is the state just collecting data for information or is funding tied to positive results)?

A: Results based accountability involves knowing what should be achieved, measuring how well it is being achieved, and using that information to make adjustments for higher success rates. Results should be a catalyst to adjust and refine SR programs to ensure all children are receiving the benefits of effective, quality programs. Although it is not tied to funding at the program level, it is critical to impacting school readiness.

Please note, however, that the State Commission has directed staff to provide specific information about child/family outcomes achieved through the School Readiness Initiative before the Commission will authorize the release of the total four-year continuation funding.

15. Q: What happens if a program is not compliant with submitting evaluation data?

A: The first step in this situation would be to offer assistance and support in finding ways to become compliant. We are committed to helping each site be successful in collecting and submitting the required data. If a program continues to be noncompliant, funding will be withheld until the program participates in all required evaluation and reporting, as

required in newly enacted legislation, Chapter 284, Statutes of 2005 (AB 109).

16. Q: Are there funds available to assist with the transition to this new framework?

A: Funds are available in the existing School Readiness program budgets.

17. Q: What if we did not budget enough funds for evaluation in our original SR application? Can we make line item changes without prior approval?

A: No. Please follow the normal procedure for pre-approval of line item changes in SR budgets. Please carefully review the new Research and Evaluation Framework requirements and the data collection/reporting system you are currently using. You may find that the modifications are not extensive or costly.

18. Q: There is concern about the State's "First Year Reauthorization" and what impact this might have on the evaluation framework reporting. Some school districts are "dark" in the summer, and programs may not start up until September. What significant data could be shown by the end of the first year in terms of documenting outcomes and receiving approval for funding reauthorization? Also, what would be the timeline for notifying counties of authorization for second year funding? If data is reported as designed in the Research and Evaluation Framework, in October, district programs would need to cease operations or operate without funding authorization between July and October. Can you discuss how this issue will be addressed?

A: Tentatively, by July 2006 Commission Staff will propose that the State Commission authorize expenditure of the full four-year Cycle 2 funding for School Readiness programs based on:

- Current state and local evaluation outcome summary;
- Commitment letter summary documenting County Commissions' commitment to transition to the new Research and Evaluation Framework effective July 1, 2006 and outcomes and indicators each program proposes to report on; and
- Summary of the new Research and Evaluation Framework's potential for reporting on child/family results (what and when).

Note: Also refer to First 5 California's website (www.ccfc.ca.gov) for general Q & A on the new Research and Evaluation Framework.

